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working, missing, women, images, mechanical, fl, neuse, 1920s, 1930s, third, fashion, olivetti

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KEYWORDS: flânerie, mechanical-flâneuse, Taylorism, traveling theory, typist
Introduction
In 1858, the Parisian writer Victor Fournel (1829–1894) noted that the qualities required for successful flânerie included an active life, distinguished by intelligence augmented by the conscientious and scrupulous performance of the duties of observing and remembering everything (Fournel [1858] 1993: 492). Fournel also compared flânerie to the operations of “an impassioned, peripatetic daguerreotype upon whom the least trace registers” (Fournel [1858] 1993: 492). In short, Fournel’s model of flânerie meant, as Cockburn (2005: 101) points out, “being in-step and observing modernity on the move with the pace and technological efficiency akin to the rapidly improving apparatus of the camera.” In the “traveling” imperative of flânerie, as described by Fournel ([1858] 1993), the gathering of impressions or information on the diversity and pace of urbane modernity underpins the very foundation of flânerie as practice. The shifting terrain of nineteenth century European and North American cities, in their advanced complexity, gave rise to new possibilities for the flâneur and the flâneuse to, as he or she might like, flâner (Laermans 1993; Ryan 1994). These practices of flânerie accumulate in the form of witnessing change and participation in change, even if only as anonymous spectator. Consequently, the demarcation of public and private visibility and who can flâner without odious social and legal sanction informs debate on the identity of the masculine flâneur and the feminine flâneuse (Wolff 1985; Buck-Morss 1986; Wilson 1992; Nead 2005).

Invariably discussion on female flânerie has proscribed the urban, social and employment strata the flâneuse could adhere to and/or the subjectivity of her viewing position (Wolff 1985; Buck-Morss 1986; Ryan 1994; Wilson 1995). However, more recent comprehensive surveys of women’s presence in the cultural and public life of major Western cities over the second half of the nineteenth century have mapped the practice of flânerie by various levels of flâneuse (Nead 2005: 13–80). As members of the general public, the flâneuse negotiated adjustments to social mores, education and employment opportunities that helped change the demographic of spectatorship in cities such as Berlin, Milan, Moscow, New York and Paris.

As already stated, the initial discussion of flânerie in this paper purposefully relies on a definition of its performance outlined by Fournel ([1858] 1993), while recognizing that visual art and fashion history (Pollock [1888] 2008; Groom 2013) tends to focus on an alternative definition of flânerie based on the writings of Fournel’s contemporary Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867). Baudelaire was a poet and critic prominent in mid-nineteenth century Parisian culture. Baudelaire’s critique “The Salon of 1846” ([1846] 1984) as well as his essay “The Painter of Modern Life” ([1859–1863] 2001) are often quoted in discussions on nascent modernism and gender identity during his time. Baudelaire’s works were of considerable interest to the cultural theorist Walter Benjamin.

Despite no direct acknowledgement of the flâneuse by Baudelaire and Benjamin, studies have documented women as being overtly or circumspectly present and enjoying the various spectacles of “modernity.” The spectacles attracting crowds of mixed gender in the nineteenth century include the arcades, Great Exhibitions, Exposition Universelles and World Fairs, gas lighting then electric lighting of city centers, and the advent of department stores (Zola [1883] 1998; Miller 1981; Greenhalgh 1988; Friedberg 1991; Richards 1991; Lancaster 1995; Nead 2005). In short, the flâneuse and her flânerie is a traveling theory open to the critical exploration of previously held positions, as Lynda Nead (2005: 71) states, “to dissolve the identity of the flâneur is to begin to dismantle one of the central orthodoxies of recent accounts of modernity.” Nead’s study of nineteenth century London tests gender assumptions of flânerie by considering “who occupied the streets of the nineteenth-century city and of the experiences of that occupation” (Nead 2005: 71). In her own words, Nead (2005: 71) sets about “a re-examination of the presence of all kinds of women on the city streets” and identifies “women who were not necessarily prostitutes or other working women, out shopping or on a philanthropic mission, but women of all classes and identities tracing paths and lives in the spaces of the city.” Significantly, Nead (2005: 71) maintains that:

Nor were these women necessarily passive victims of a voracious male gaze, but they can be imagined as women who enjoyed and participated in the “ocular economy” of the city; they were women who looked at and returned the gazes of passers-by.

Likewise, the conventional gender limitations placed on the practice of flânerie as it has been described in Baudelaire ([1846] 1984, 1859–1863 2001), and by Benjamin ([1927–1940] 2003) in his studies on Baudelaire and the flâneur, tend to dismiss too quickly or speak for the presence of women. In his review “The Salon of 1846,” Baudelaire ([1846] 1984: 18) made a demand of artists to quit their contrived studio compositions and take note of the “pageant of fashionable life and the thousands of floating existences” on the streets of Paris, including “kept women”. This call by Baudelaire is often cited as an early rallying cry for the male artist (flâneur) to observe the effects of nineteenth century industrial and urban modernity in progress. Especially when Baudelaire ([1846] 1984: 18)
states that “The life of our city [Paris] is rich in poetic and marvellous subjects. We are enveloped and steeped as though in an atmosphere of the marvellous; but we do not notice it”. Baudelaire’s much later essay “The Painter of Modern Life” ([1859–1863] 2001) is a hagiographic outline of the skills displayed by his contemporary the illustrator Constantin Guys (1802–1892). Yet Baudelaire’s later essay is often taken apart and selectively quoted so as to describe the attributes of the flâneur, who as Baudelaire ([1859–1863] 2001: 9) describes Guys, is a “spectator” but one who is also “a prince who everywhere rejoices in his incognito”: an unnoticed observer rather than participant. Whether interpreted as genuine exaltation of Guys or a metaphoric device, what is frequently overlooked in Baudelaire’s essay “The Painter of Modern Life” ([1859–1863] 2001) is that he describes an expanded act of looking and noting, one that is comparable to that outlined by Fournel ([1858] 1993), especially when Baudelaire ([1859–1863] 2001: 10) says of Guys that he:

enters into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy. Or we might liken him to a mirror as vast as the crowd itself; or to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness, responding to each one of its movements and reproducing the multiplicity of life and the flickering grace of all the elements of life.

In “The Painter of Modern Life” ([1859–1863] 2001: 10, 13, 31, 33–37), Baudelaire’s digressions on women’s fashion regardless of their cultural range, status and class registers and even when eroticized is too easily dismissed as evidence of the flâneur or Baudelaire objectifying women. Aside from his discussion of historic fashion plates ([1859–1863] 2001: 2–3), the key point ignored is that Baudelaire’s descriptions of women’s deportment and dress indicate first and foremost the visibility of women. In short, if you are being seen, especially in public, you are also seeing, while admittedly the how of seeing, or the play of subject/object relationships, remains an open question.

As suggested above, acts of flânerie imply observational strategies and their immediate or consequent contemplative consideration. Similarly, and as will be argued shortly, observational strategies and contemplative consideration are also skills and qualities that inform the successful requirements of efficiency engineers and efficient work practices. The direct relationship of movement to action and its consequent effect conditions individuals engaged in analogue processing, such as drafting and planning, splicing and joining film, oiling, maintaining and operating machinery, taking dictation and typing, and is best described as mechanical: producing physical and practical outcomes.

If not already clear, the motivation for this discussion is support for the identity and activity of the flâneuse, as a component of the term...
“mechanical-flâneuse” (as coined by Cockburn 2005) with its reference to the efficient “new” or modernist woman at work during the first half of the twentieth century. However, this does leave open the question of whether a corresponding masculine description of flânerie informing a complementary term of a “mechanical-flâneur” can be outlined. Unfortunately, and for the moment, defining the “mechanical-flâneur” is not within the scope of this paper. Arguably, and as already outlined, the flâneuse and the flâneur engage in flânerie as an active practice of “traveling theory.” However, the survival of flânerie into the twentieth century has been questioned. It was Walter Benjamin, in The Arcades Project ([1927–1940] 2003), who cites a line from Georges Friedmann (1936) stating that “Taylor’s obsession, and that of his collaborators and successors, is the ‘war on flânerie’” (cited in Benjamin 2003: 436). But to the contrary, this paper argues that flânerie did survive its initial encounter with Taylorism in 1911, with both concepts and their performance traveling as theory and practice well into the twentieth century. Nevertheless, it is important at this point to briefly revisit Frederick Winslow Taylor and Taylorism.

Taylorism, Flânerie and the Conditioning Influences of Technological Modernity

Taylorism had broad appeal and is often referred to as scientific management, while its adherence and impact is termed the efficiency movement. Its application to the improvement of work practices went well beyond the construction site, factory and into all levels of skilled, semi-professional and professional activity (including surgery), as will be discussed. Importantly, the time frame under review is the last period of analogue and electrically motivated analogue systems, several decades before the digital revolution of the second half of the twentieth century. It is to capture the impact of Taylorism on the pre-digital character of work processes, irrespective of whether it is in the factory, design studio, film set or in office administration (clerical work), that the term “mechanical” is used as the prefix to flâneuse.

The basis of Frederick Winslow Taylor’s approach was to standardize work procedures following thorough examination of the best method to perform a work task (Taylor [1911] 1964: 83). The aim of Taylorism was to cut down on waste in materials, time and energy performing tasks (Taylor [1911] 1964: 5), to improve the efficient scheduling of tasks in industries (Taylor [1911] 1964: 7), especially manufacturing, and thus to lift productive output and profit margins, which would flow on to increased wage remuneration (Taylor [1911] 1964: 15, 142). Taylor also claimed that efficiency along the lines he advocated would reduce labor costs, as one efficient worker could perform the tasks of at least three inefficient workers (Taylor [1911] 1964: 95, 102, 136).2 Notwithstanding the pragmatic application of Taylorism, what is often overlooked
is that Frederick Winslow Taylor ([1911] 1964), in his introduction to “The Principles of Scientific Management”, opens by stating that:

We can see our forests vanishing, our water-powers going to waste, our soil being carried by floods into the sea; and the end of our coal and our iron is in sight. But our larger wastes of human effort, which go on every day through such of our acts as are blundering, ill-directed, or inefficient, ... are less visible, less tangible, and are but vaguely appreciated. (Taylor [1911] 1964: 5)

The emphasis in the above quote is on witnessing the negative effects of industrial modernity, so as to be aware of our collective social shortcomings. Taylor goes on to add that “We can see and feel the waste of material things. Awkward, inefficient, or ill-directed movements of men, however, leave nothing visible or tangible behind them” (Taylor [1911] 1964: 5). Taylor’s concern is obviously framed by observation as a generalized form of flânerie put to use, one that reflectively raises consideration of efficient if not sustainable effort and use of resources. He also notes that human movement is ephemeral and especially wasteful if it achieves little. However, the paradox of movement is that, irrespective of whether wasteful or not, under most circumstances human movement remains ephemeral. In short, measurements of inefficiency and efficiency alike require an act of flânerie as witnessing. In the case of efficiency studies witnessing is often accompanied by its capture or representation via a variety of media and methods. Without going into detail as to how efficiency studies were conducted via instruments of image capture and/or measurement, someone had to be observing the movements of society in general or acts of “productivity” in particular. Whoever the observing efficiency engineer may happen to be, their act of witnessing and recording would most likely have appeared to be no more than “informed” idleness at best, in other words flânerie, from the point of view of those being observed and actively doing work such as lifting and loading pig-iron in one of Taylor’s case studies (Taylor [1911] 1964: 42–48).

The often-argued distinction or dichotomy between flânerie as unproductive idleness and work as purposeful or productive activity nearly always pivots on an impending or immediate concrete outcome and effect or lack thereof. The argument that Taylorism and flânerie are diametrically opposed rests on a false assumption that Taylorism is defined exclusively by its outcomes, such as the improved production line, improved product output, efficient dispatch centers and the “one-best-method” of performing a work activity. In doing so the proponents of the dichotomy between Taylorism and flânerie fail to see their similarities as performed, that function around witnessing the present and contemplating as well as recording, even if only mnemonically, its effect. Likewise, this dichotomy fails to recognize the significance of moments
of observation and calculation, or reflective thought, that may to others appear as idleness regardless of whether one is engaged in flânerie or some other salaried or waged activity.

In short, the efficiency engineer, quite often as an anonymous spectator, engages Fournel’s model of flânerie as noted above that calls for “the most active of lives, the most fertile and productive; an intelligent and conscientious idler, who scrupulously performs his duties—that is, observes and remembers everything” (Fournel [1858] 1993: 492). Contrary to popular responses, including Benjamin’s citing of Friedmann (Benjamin [c. 1940] 2003: 436) that cast early twentieth century “scientific management” as a strictly calculating response to industrial productivity, scientific management’s foundation in both Taylor’s text and the research of fellow efficiency engineers Frank and Lillian Gilbreth, between 1908 and 1924, is first and foremost couched in canny observation. Frank Gilbreth (1868–1924) and Lillian Gilbreth (1878–1972), his wife and research partner, made valuable contributions to the fields of motion and fatigue studies in scientific management. In particular Frank and Lillian Gilbreth took an interest in “rest periods” spread in between lengths of concentrated and efficient work as a way of conserving energy, reflecting on performance and increasing productivity (Gilbreth and Gilbreth [1916] 1953). The efficiency engineer is not only the flâneuse/flâneur of productive work but also of our collective impact and its resonance and presence in our world and on our daily routines.

Nevertheless, it was Taylor’s emphasis on not wasting time, or the efficient use of movement for the purpose of increasing productivity, that is often interpreted as contrary to the fundamental characteristics and practice of flânerie. Yet as already stated, a central characteristic of flânerie as described by Fournel ([1858] 1993) that also appears in Baudelaire ([1859–1863] 2001) and later in Studies of Paris by Edmondo de Amicis (1879), is the witnessing, categorizing and recording procedure of flânerie. Likewise, Benjamin in The Arcades Project does on at least one occasion concede that “the flâneur, as is well known, makes ‘studies’” (Benjamin [1927–1940] 2003: 453) when quoting Pierre Larousse (1872) on the early nineteenth century composer Ludwig van Beethoven’s wanderings around Vienna. Larousse states that “most men of genius were great flâneurs—but industrious, productive flâneurs” (Larousse cited in Benjamin [1927–1940] 2003: 453–454).

Productive flânerie not only reminds us once again of Fournel ([1858] 1993) but also Benjamin’s interest in technological modernity, including its impact as a form of behavioral trope that is a consequence of being “present” in the modern. The demand to be present in modernity and to take note of the modern is, as already mentioned, a key theme in the writings of Baudelaire. Baudelaire ([1859–1863] 2001: 1-2), in “The Painter of Modern Life,” under the sub-heading “Beauty, Fashion and Happiness,” describes fashion plate collectors with interests in “delightful coloured engravings of the last century,”
meaning the late 1700s. To which Baudelaire ([1859–1863] 2001: 1) adds that “these [engravings] represent the past: my concern today is with the paintings of manners of the present.” For Baudelaire ([1859–1863] 2001: 1), images of the past were only “interesting” for the lessons of “historical value” they could impart. In place of inspecting past fashion plates, Baudelaire ([1859–1863] 2001: 1) suggests addressing “the present,” adding that “the pleasure which we derive from the representation of the present is due not only to the beauty with which it can be invested, but also to its essential quality of being present.”

The “quality of being present” described by Baudelaire ([1859–1863] 2001: 1) is required when witnessing modernity, and in keeping with his demand in “The Salon of 1846” previously mentioned. The being present, regardless of how noticed or visible, is the essential quality of flânerie, in seeking to efficiently understand modernity. The flânerie of the efficiency engineer in scientific management is Taylorism at large, and for those inducted into the efficient procedures of modern industry, commerce and retail it quickly became a general condition of awareness. As traveling theory, late nineteenth century flânerie and early twentieth century Taylorism merged into our urban mobility as waged or salaried identities.

Returning to Benjamin’s writings, he not only addresses romantic interpretations of Baudelaire’s flâneur but also the impact of nineteenth and early twentieth century technological innovations on modernity. In “Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century <Exposé of 1935>,” Benjamin ([1927–1940] 2003: 1): 3–4) focuses on how technology and construction in iron and glass of public architecture, such as in “arcades, exhibition halls, stations,” conditioned cosmopolitan habits of movement and attention. In “On Some Motif in Baudelaire”, Benjamin ([1939] 1992b: 170–171) recaps on several themes covered in other writings attributing changes in the experience of urban modernity to several nineteenth and early twentieth century inventions, such as the match, telephone, photography, advertising, mass media and city traffic.

Benjamin ([1939] 1992b: 171) nominates the match as the first of many inventions to have “one thing in common: one abrupt movement of the hand triggers a process of many steps.” Benjamin ([1939] 1992b: 171) then lists “the telephone, where lifting of a receiver has taken the place of the steady movement that used to be required to crank the older models.” Benjamin ([1939] 1992b: 171) also places importance on the proliferation of photography:

Of the countless movements of switching, inserting, pressing, and the like, the “snapping” of the photographer has had the greatest consequences. A touch of the finger now sufficed to fix an event for an unlimited period of time. The camera gave the moment a posthumous shock, as it were.
Benjamin ([1939] 1992b: 171) collectively describes striking a match, operating a telephone and snapping a photograph as “haptic experiences,” linking them to the “series of shocks and collisions” typifying “optic” experiences induced by rapid shifts in visual attention when reading news print, advertising and negotiating “the traffic of a big city.” Benjamin ([1939] 1992b: 170–171) is alerting us to the conditioning of metropolitan individuals where “at dangerous intersections, nervous impulses flow through him [her] in rapid succession, like the energy from a battery.”

Paraphrasing Baudelaire ([1859-63] 2001: 9–10), Benjamin ([1939] 1992b: 171) describes a person’s experience of these busy city streets as an immersion “into the crowd as into a reservoir of electric energy.” Benjamin ([1939] 1992b: 171) then contrasts Baudelaire’s modernity and his own account with the earlier description of urban crowds by Edgar Allan Poe ([1840] 1998), arguing that “whereas Poe’s passers-by cast glances in all directions which still appeared to be aimless, today’s pedestrians are obliged to do so in order to keep abreast of traffic signals.” Benjamin ([1939] 1992b: 171) sums up by stating that “technology has subjected the human sensorium to a complex kind of training” and then completes his observation by turning his attention to the impact of moving film in shaping human activity and attention, asserting that:

There came a day when a new and urgent need for stimuli was met by the film. In a film, perception in the form of shocks was established as a formal principle. That which determines the rhythm of production on a conveyor belt is the basis of the rhythm of reception in the film. (Benjamin [1939] 1992b: 171)

At this moment two points are worth considering. Firstly Benjamin’s writings, dating from the late 1920s until his death in 1940, witness him juggling his interest in nineteenth century Paris, modernity and the everyday (Benjamin [1927–1940] 2003) with profound insights into the conditioning influences of technology (Benjamin [1936] 1992a). Secondly, in the context of early twentieth century German critical theory, Benjamin is not alone. Georg Simmel (1858–1918), publishing before Frederick Winslow Taylor ([1911] 1964) and the efficiency movement gained international attention, was a thinker known to Benjamin. Simmel’s ([1903] 1997: 174–185) description of the circumstances giving rise to and the purpose of the “metropolitan blasé attitude” as a citizen’s immutable facade is similar to Benjamin’s interest in the shaping experiences of the urban and technology. In close proximity with complete strangers, Simmel’s ([1903] 1997: 175–177) “blasé attitude” supplies the social distance required to contemplate, construct and put to work these compact, complex and perpetually shifting urban conditions. Simmel ([1903] 1997: 175–177) is also explicit in linking urban
society and the “blasé attitude” to a chronologically regulated and sophisticated money economy, calculating that:

The relationship and affairs of the typical metropolitan usually are so varied and complex that without the strictest punctuality in promises and services the whole structure would break down into an inextricable chaos. ... If all clocks and watches in Berlin would suddenly go wrong in different ways, even if only by one hour, all economic life and communication of the city would be disrupted for a long time. (Simmel [1903] 1997: 177)

In the above quote, Simmel’s observation on scheduling in urban affairs reinforces the importance placed on the divisible increments of seconds, minutes and hours that punctuate moments of pause and movement in early twentieth century modernity. Men and women’s pocket, pendant and wristwatches had become increasingly available to all sectors of society in the late nineteenth century (Harris 2005: 410–411), and to his prior observation Simmel ([1903] 1997: 177–178) adds:

Punctuality, calculability, exactness are forced upon life by the complexity and extension of metropolitan existence and are not only most intimately connected with its money economy and intellectualistic character. These traits must also colour the contents of life and favour the exclusion of those irrational, instinctive, sovereign traits and impulses which aim at determining the mode of life from within, instead of receiving the general and precisely schematized form of life from without.

Writing later than Simmel and under the impact of scientific management, Benjamin’s friend and contemporary Siegfried Kracauer (1889–1966) assumes a more critical take on Taylorism. Kracauer ([1927] 1995: 78) describes efficiency principles as a “production process” that influences everyday routines so extensively that it “runs its secret course in public”. Kracauer ([1927] 1995: 78–79) is particularly explicit arguing that “the Taylor system merely pushes to their ultimate conclusion” the organized movement of the masses and their distraction in popular entertainment, or what he terms “mass ornament.” Even allowing for the fraught political context in which Kracauer was writing, two statements by him stand out. Firstly, Kracauer ([1927] 1995: 79) notes the impact in general of Taylorism on mid-1920s modernity, stating that “The masses organized in these movements come from offices and factories; the formal principle according to which they are molded determines them in reality as well.” Secondly, Kracauer ([1927] 1995: 79) recognizes that:
No matter how low one gauges the value of the mass ornament, its degree of reality is still higher than that of artistic productions which cultivate outdated noble sentiments in obsolete forms—even if it means nothing more than that.

In the case of Benjamin and Kracauer, especially Benjamin’s notes on Baudelaire’s flâneur and on technology, both authors were writing well after Frank Gilbreth ([1908] 1953) and Frederick Winslow Taylor ([1911] 1964) set off scientific management’s impact on modern methods of efficiency. In the case of the Soviet Union’s first interest in scientific management, there is at least a decade from Lenin’s pronouncement in favor of Taylorism under socialism (Lenin [1918] 1951), and the writings of Benjamin and Kracauer. In other words, the shortcoming of the assertion by Friedmann (as cited by Benjamin) on the impact on flânerie of Taylorism is that it takes a static view of both concepts, their practice and intersection over time. The transition of concepts, their practice and intersection over time is recognized in the definition of travelling theory by Edward Said (1982, p.41), when he states that: “Like people and schools of criticism, ideas and theories travel – from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another”. As Said (1982) points out, the effect of theories on an intellectual and social level is dynamic. The social impact of Taylorism on flânerie and the inverse impact of flânerie on Taylorism are in concept and practice ongoing and open for examination. The antithetical positioning of Baudelaire’s flâneur, as discussed in Benjamin’s writings and comparative to popular notions of Taylorism, struggles once readings of flânerie and Taylorism step away from fixed interpretations of flânerie through Baudelaire and reexamine Taylorism and the efficiency movement. To reinforce the point, Taylorism, like flânerie, is a traveling concept and both Taylorism and flânerie negotiate and renegotiate their form, interpretation and practice across time and place.

By the 1920s and 1930s earlier habits of canny flânerie that characterized the urbane flâneuse of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, especially in the new terrain of the department store (Lancaster 1995: 171–194), broadened to informed attributes of the 1920s “new” woman (Cockburn 2005). In her embodiment as “new” woman, via attire, accoutrements and deportment, in employment and at leisure and with the right to vote increasingly being extended, the canny urbane flâneuse also embraced the characteristics of the emergent Taylorist type: necessary for continued employment, social engagement and the wise use of income. In short, the early twentieth century urbane flâneuse incorporates into her identity Taylorist efficiency as nuanced “new” woman: the “mechanical-flâneuse” (Cockburn 2005: 102). Yet like all nominal identities the mechanical-flâneuse is a generalized descriptive profile, while in occupation, place and time she is contextually informed by her performance that is often subjectively and descriptively distinct.
Consequently, discussion of the following examples drawn from several occupations in the USA, USSR and Italy, between the mid-1920s and late 1930s, reinforces both the shared and distinct qualities of the mechanical-flâneuse. Before turning to discussion of the exemplary images depicting the American and European mechanical-flâneuse, the more overtly in-meshed and “productivist” qualities of the Soviet mechanical-flâneuse are discussed.

Specifically, this study investigates those moments when traveling or change is presented in photographs, moving pictures and advertising graphics. The five sets of images in question include a 1924 photo-portrait by Aleksandr Rodchenko of his partner Varvara Stepanova at the height of their preeminence as members of the Soviet avant-garde in the first decade following the Bolshevik revolution; selected stills from Dziga Vertov’s 1929 documentary film The Man with a Movie Camera, which was produced, filmed, edited and released in an atmosphere of Stalinist pressure to demonstrate relevance to the reconstruction of Soviet industry and agriculture; and two still images from A Woman of Affairs (1929), a Hollywood film directed by Clarence Brown and starring Greta Garbo as a doomed flapper or “new” woman. In addition to the above analysis, reference is made to Ernst Lubitsch’s 1939 MGM feature film Ninotchka, again starring Greta Garbo but this time as an “efficient” Soviet female trade commissar. To conclude, a 1934 poster by the graphic artist Xanti Schawinsky (1934–1935), produced in Milan to promote Olivetti’s new portable typewriter, is examined. In each example women are shown in-meshed in various ways as representative of the mechanical-flâneuse. Yet in each case variations signal the traveling of this concept: its negotiation and renegotiation of identity, of form and of practice.

**Stepanova and the Drift of Engagé**

A relationship exists between actively participating in modernity (being a modernist) and the concentrated self-awareness of being modern that is often captured in a variety of media. Acting out or assuming this concentrated state of self-awareness can be likened to Erving Goffman’s “giving off” as a play of individual expressiveness in the act of impression management by the individual concerned (Goffman [1959] 1990: 14–16). Goffman ([1959] 1990: 16) refers to these “expressions given off” as “the more theatrical and contextual kind, the non-verbal, presumably unintentional kind, whether this communication be purposely engineered or not.” Importantly, Goffman’s concept of “giving off” in the management of self-presentation is not exclusive to any strata of society (class: bourgeois/proletarian) and set of social circumstances, public or private. But Goffman’s ([1963] 1966: 69–75) later concept of “away,” more recently redefined as “going away” by Adriana de Souza e Silva and Jordan Frith (2012: 25–47, 61, 64–67), is characterized by its

In both Goffman’s original concept of “away” and its reworking by de Souza e Silva and Frith as “going away,” a key factor is a sense of purposeful distraction that excuses immediate or intimate social involvement, especially in waiting rooms, thoroughfares and on public transport. Additionally, strategies of “away” or “going away” impart significance to an otherwise distracted or transcendent presence, referred to by Goffman ([1963] 1966: 51) as “minimal main involvement.” When a person is in-meshed in the processes of productivity, an act of “going away” accurately describes the gaze or stare of purposeful thoughtfulness given off as self-expression. Significantly, Charles Baudelaire’s flâneur and Georg Simmel’s “blasé attitude” are discussed by de Souza e Silva and Frith (2012: 30) as methods used to restructure “the choreography of attention” and “manage the stimulation of crowded metropolises.”

Admittedly, de Souza e Silva and Frith (2012: 25–47) are primarily interested in the nineteenth and early twentieth century “interfaces” or objects such as paperback novels and newspapers deployed by people in public places and on public transport to “filter” and maintain control over their surroundings (de Souza e Silva and Frith 2012: 38–39). Nevertheless, to be able to give off and maintain strategies of “going away” using books and newspapers still implies a certain estimation and constant awareness of one’s immediate surroundings in those shared situations. In public perpetual acts of flânerie irrespective of gender or class constantly occur: as de Souza e Silva and Frith (2012: 27) note, “undivided attention (to people, to spaces) is an unachievable, idealized goal. In reality, our attention spans cycle through different things and environments.” What is played out in public when expressing or giving off having gone away is simply a structuring of levels of attention and any level can be reengaged at a moment’s notice.

The mid-twentieth century flânerie of the mechanical-flâneuse as a set of actions is of interest, especially when mapped as social performance in biography and fiction. Yet, for the management of this discussion, focus falls on the “giving off” expressiveness as it has been captured, as an “away” or “going away” stare or gaze held by the mechanical-flâneuse, on film or in advertising posters and graphics. The stare or gaze given off as an act of going away by the mechanical-flâneuse also intersects with Frank and Lillian Gilbreth’s ([1916] 1953: 309–310) efficiency movement interest in “a fixed rest period” and “time to rest when one needs it,” as productive pauses in work activity. In each case to be examined, the stare or gaze occurs in the context of productivity (the mechanical) and being knowingly modernist (flânerie: revolutionary or otherwise).

The first image to be examined is by Aleksandr Rodchenko (1891–1956) and dates from 1924 (Figure 1). It is one of a number of photo-portraits of Rodchenko’s partner and renowned fabric designer Varvara
Stepanova (1894–1958). In this image, Rodchenko has shifted the whole picture plane off the usual vertical and horizontal axis consistent with the viewer. In doing so, he employed a device used widely by the Soviet avant-garde to achieve qualities the Russian formalist Viktor Shklovsky (1893–1984) referred to as the displacement, defamiliarization (ostrenanie) or the “making strange” of conventional cultural expectations. Rodchenko’s employment of this device is especially noticeable in the image of Stepanova, which on first encounter is distinctive for the emphatic play of intersecting diagonal lines in the composition. The result is that the seat on which Stepanova is resting and the bench-top at knee height to her right appear to be tilted approximately 25 degrees anticlockwise. But it is not the use of these formalist devices that is most relevant to discussion of this image in the present context, rather it is the content of the image and the disposition of its subject.

In Rodchenko’s photo-portrait, Stepanova has her left leg resting on her right knee and her left hand and arm are resting on the left leg. Her right arm hangs by her side and her right hand is possibly touching or exploring the edge of the workbench. She is dressed in a V-neck short-sleeved dress, which appears to be cotton or linen. The fabric design of this dress is Stepanova’s own invention (Strizhenova 1991: 146) and its

Figure 1
pattern consists of thick bars of light and dark contrast, further enlivened by an organization that places them in large circles at equal spacing and off-center on a base arrangement of similar type. The overall effect is that the circles containing vertical light and dark bars appear to hover over a geometric background design. This creates a pleasing rather than disorienting optical illusion, one that is industrially abstract rather than figuratively descriptive in its repetitions of pattern. Smiling and relaxed, Stepanova’s face is turned to the right and tilted slightly upward. She gazes in the direction of a light source that bathes her features in a similar pattern of contrasts that almost matches her fabric design. Presumably, the light source that attracts her stare enters through a studio window, as on the workbench are clearly visible a collection of printmaker’s tools and implements. There are two rectangles on the wall to Stepanova’s left, with their location relative to one another suggesting pinned-up designs, sheets or pattern plans. In all, these signifiers indicate this is Stepanova’s workplace.

This image unambiguously situates Stepanova in her professional persona, not unlike Lubitsch establishing scenes of Ninotchka on the railway platform (Figure 2) in the film of the same name (Ninotchka, 1939). Ninotchka arrives wearing a stern, if not dour, version of the 1930s Soviet female commissar’s “business suit” and gives off a gaze similar to Stepanova’s. Both Stepanova and Ninotchka’s stare are without a point of focus—they are not inspecting any object in particular, they are stares of “away.” In Rodchenko’s photograph, Stepanova is not only located in the context that defines her—the designer’s studio—but she also wears her identity, a dress bearing a fabric design of her own making.

**Figure 2**
Frame capture from Ninotchka (1939) showing Ninotchka (Greta Garbo) on the railway platform, directed by Ernst Lubitsch for MGM. Image copyright Turner Entertainment Co., and Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc. The author has made reasonable efforts to contact the rightsholder to confirm copyright status. If you are the rightsholder, and require an amendment, please contact the journal’s editor to facilitate a correction.
Jon Cockburn

The German sociological term *Gesamtkunstwerk*, meaning complete or total work of art, could apply here, but for one rather important qualifier: Stepanova is not absorbed in the personal preoccupations of fine art creation, but rather in the effort and actual logical activity of design problem-solving. In stark contrast to any notion of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the Soviet avant-garde’s attempt to remain relevant and active in the revolutionary process is more accurately referred to by the French adjective *engagé* that imparts a sense of being socially motivated. This sense is not found in its English translation as “morally committed” (*Concise Oxford Dictionary* 1990: 388), which tends toward a more Protestant and evangelical meaning. In French, the word *engagé* has an etymology stretching back to the first stirring of emancipationist principles in the pre-French Revolution writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) and other encyclopedists. The meaning of *engagé* is understood as it has been shaped by the long history of French political turmoil, noted for its preoccupation with social and economic issues.

Consequently, the term *engagé* accurately describes the Soviet avant-garde’s sense of their thorough inscription, through pronouncements, publications and manifestos, into the revolutionary agenda. In effect, the Soviet avant-garde demonstrated their alliance to the revolution by claims to affiliations, sympathies and practices exceeding the conventional pre-revolutionary concerns of artistic expression. As indicated above, numerous translated examples of these pronouncements, including those by Rodchenko, Stepanova and Vertov, can be found in Bowlt (1988), Harrison and Wood (1993) and Taylor and Christie (1994). This notion of *engagé* was demonstrated in the Soviet avant-garde’s aim to address “production-art” and industrial design, and is given testimonial representation in Rodchenko’s image of Stepanova: a disposition that was receptive to Soviet interpretations of the efficiency movement.

Nevertheless, the position of the *flâneuse* in immediate post-revolutionary Russia raises an interesting question, as a generalized war on things bourgeois most probably rendered any form of ostentatious *flânerie* unwise. Yet as already argued, the feminine form of the *flâneuse* stepped away from strict barriers of class and status to gain increasing visibility throughout the later nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Likewise, any claim against acts of *flânerie* in post-revolutionary Russia fails to take into account the way acts of general awareness, central to *flânerie*, were valued as alert attention to efficient productivity in action and in planning.

Revolutionary *flânerie* as an expression given off is an efficient modernist present-presentness, one that also imparts a sense of present-purposefulness. In 1923, for Soviet avant-garde theorist Osip Brik (1888–1945), writing in the avant-garde journal *LEF* (Left Front of the Arts), present-presentness imparting present-purposefulness meant poets attaining “knowledge of the laws of production instead of a
‘mystical’ penetration into the ‘secrets’ of creation,” as “everything great has been created in answer to questions of the day” (Brik [1923] 1993: 324). For Stepanova ([1923] 1989: 173), writing in the same year but in a later edition of LEF, it meant turning away from past fascination with fashions worn by mannequins in shop windows to embrace “cultural reality” where “clothing is tied to industrial development.” Rodchenko’s photograph of Stepanova gives vision to the 1924 demand by Brik for painters to abandon their garrets and enter the factory. Brik’s demand was based on the belief that artists should abandon self-absorbed expression for pragmatic application to the “basic idea of productional art—that the outer appearance of an object is determined by the object’s economic purpose and not by abstract, aesthetic considerations” (Brik [1924] 1988: 249).

Brik ([1924] 1988: 249) also cited both Rodchenko and Stepanova as exemplars of this view that the “artistic culture of the future is being created in factories and plants, not in attic studios.” However, the breadth of interpretation of Stepanova in Rodchenko’s image neither begins nor ends with the relationship between the cultural practitioners Rodchenko, Stepanova and the intellectual Brik. In the larger post-revolutionary context, all three and the avant-garde in general were attempting to maintain relevance. After the hardship of the revolution’s terror, the civil war and the economic collapse of the early 1920s, the Soviets had entered a new period of relative stability stimulated by Lenin’s New Economic Policy (NEP) that sanctioned forms of capitalism under socialism. The driving program was aimed at the need to expand and modernize Soviet industrial and agricultural production, which was propelled by Lenin’s promotion of scientific management in industry (Merkle 1980; Rogger 1981), including Soviet enthusiasm for the achievements of the US automobile manufacturer Henry Ford (Hughes 1989).

The NEP and its Stalinist variant, the Five-Year Plans, would be pursued in one form or another employing US models of industrial organization until the outbreak of the Great Patriotic War (Bailes 1977, 1978, 1981). Not surprisingly, as early as 1924, cultural practitioners in the Soviet system were increasingly called upon to justify their place in a state society short of resources and requiring organizational discipline. The dilemma that faced the avant-garde was that their rhetoric and practice claimed revolutionary credentials and preeminence, while ultimate revolutionary authority remained with the upper levels of the Communist Party. Nevertheless, individuals like Brik, Rodchenko, Stepanova and Vertov saw themselves as members of the revolution, and as steeped in the revolution as their political peers and superiors, a point that was argued with vigor in their pronouncements and publications (Bowlt 1988; Harrison and Wood 1993; Taylor and Christie 1994). In Osip Brik’s estimation, Stepanova and her peers personified the new efficiency of revolutionary application, especially in her work on Soviet fabric design and production (Brik [1924] 1988: 248–249).
Her countenance and, in Rodchenko’s photo-portrait, the very cloth of her garments and her ambient circumstance attest to this but for one observable fact: the lack of physical (or implied mental) activity.9

In Rodchenko’s photograph Stepanova is not shown at a moment of movement in productive endeavor; rather, she is caught at a moment in between the performance of the revolutionary modernist rebuilding of society. Her stare, although still within the context of her productive endeavors in the design studio, can also be described as conforming to Leon Charney’s concept of “drift” (1998). Charney defines drift in similar terms to Goffman’s “giving off” and “away.” Stepanova’s stare is consistent with the suspensive surplus that surrounds and frames the “remorseless” flux of modernity, wherein there is “an empty space, an interval that takes the place of a stable present” (Charney 1998: 6–7). Charney (1998: 17) also adds that drift can be described “as a new modern means of putting waste to work.” Stepanova’s stare as ambient drift in the context of Soviet modernity, as captured by Rodchenko, is also her act of “giving off” the individual expressiveness (Goffman [1959] 1990: 14) of the Soviet mechanical-flâneuse. Stepanova’s contemplative stillness is one of those purposeful pauses in the efficient exercise of “productivist” capacity: it is a stare engagé. The sense of alertness shared by flânerie and the efficiency movement, when put to use by sympathetic members of Soviet society, would have been an act in support of vigilance towards maintaining the revolution and its goals. At large and on the move the Soviet mechanical-flâneuse was a productivist engagé. In her studio, Stepanova’s stare, captured by Rodchenko’s photograph, is most likely a pause in revolutionary activity in keeping with Frank and Lillian Gilbreth’s ([1916] 1953: 309–310) “fixed rest period” in between work procedures. To reiterate, Stepanova’s pause and gaze in the context of her studio gives off the expression of a revolutionary avant-garde member in thought, planning out her contribution to collective production even if captured away “at rest” or “drift.”

**Amerikanizatsiya, Teilorizatsiya and Dziga Vertov’s Cine-Eyes Group**

Among the first to refer to American efficiency as a model for Soviet cinema production, and one of the most profound, was the film director and theorist Lev Kuleshov (1899–1970). In August 1922, he approached efficient filmmaking via the technique of montage and referred to exemplary instances in the “good American picture” that exhibited an “extreme degree of organization of its material” (Kuleshov [1922] 1994a: 67). In the same month, in the journal Kino-Fot, Kuleshov attacked exaggerated “dilettantism” (Kuleshov [1922] 1994b: 68) in the visual arts, literature and film, asserting that “Only amateurs could work on the preparation of a product without a scientific method of studying all the laws of its production.” In this article Kuleshov supplied a plan
of working which included fundamentals that any efficiency engineer might have considered: “1. Precision in time. 2. Precision in space. 3. Reality in raw material. 4. Precision in organisation” (Kuleshov [1922] 1994b: 68). As already mentioned, Kuleshov’s 1922 directions to Soviet filmmakers contain acknowledged and implied Americanisms, including the use of editing to logically and economically propel narrative continuity and Taylorism (precision) applied to editing (and filmmaking in general) so as to make the most efficient use of resources (Kuleshov [1922] 1994c: 73).

In the same 1922 issue of Kino-Fot, Vertov’s manifesto “We” extolled the American film for its example of “ostentatious dynamism”, as well as “rapid shot changes and close-ups” (Vertov [1922] 1994a: 69). Vertov also launched into his celebrated theme on the need to become a machine, asserting that “the new man, liberated from unwieldiness and awkwardness, with the precise, light movements of the machine, will be the grateful object of the filming” (Vertov [1922] 1994a: 69–71). However, by 1928, Vertov was finding it necessary to state that although his film crew “Cine-Eyes” worked without scripts, they “devote more effort and attention to their preparatory plans than do those who work in played films” (Vertov [1928] 1994b: 203). Vertov’s point was that his film unit operated on a model of managerial efficiency. Vertov’s crew worked by methods involving pre-planning, logistical previews and reviews, and he argued that ultimately they had a capacity for accountability along Taylorist lines. In 1929, Vertov released his documentary film The Man with a Movie Camera in the context of mounting opposition to his radical formalism and there can be little doubt that the film was a cinematic attempt to counter such criticism. Nevertheless, in this paper the film’s interest goes beyond consideration of Vertov’s standing in Stalinist Russia, in particular, to its depiction of the “new” Soviet woman10 as the mechanical-flâneuse. Running for approximately 67 minutes, the film shows over 61 instances of women at work, leisure and exercise, or otherwise occupied.

Amongst these 61 instances, at least nine show women involved in different technical and industrial machine operations, including working in a typing pool. At different times in the film there are several shots of Vertov’s wife Elizaveta Svilova editing and cataloguing film. The film twice shows different women employed in skilled and unskilled labor, and the procedures used by a woman’s beautician are captured, including manicure and cutting, washing and blow-drying hair. Six different female athletic events are witnessed, and a number of women are shown learning to swim using a synchronized Taylorist approach. Several women are also shown applying and taking a mud bath and three different women’s exercise machines are demonstrated. One woman is shown studying a newspaper in a library, while another displays skill in target practice at a fun fair using an air rifle to shoot at a swastika (fascism) and empty beer bottles (alcoholism). Other images show women
working in the Soviet entertainment industry, including a line of ballet dancers practicing, a dancer demonstrating modern dance steps and a female orchestra conductor. Images of a woman getting married and giving birth are also included. In contrast, other images in *The Man with a Movie Camera* show inactive women, including a shop window mannequin, three well-dressed women in a horse-drawn carriage, a female vagrant wearing expensive shoes (possibly a street-walker) and a woman in a bar with a group of men drinking beer. However, of particular interest are the more personal images of a woman fastening a brassiere as she dresses for the day and a woman on the beach applying lipstick with the aid of a compact mirror.

In Vertov’s film, the depiction of the woman fastening her brassiere might to many viewers appear as a mundane dress routine. But in 1929, especially in the USSR and Europe, this would not necessarily have been the case. The brassiere was a distinctly new American form of women’s undergarment often claimed to have been first patented in 1914 (Gau 2005: 190; O’Hara Callan 1998: 43–44). The brassiere was rapidly adapted by manufacturers and adopted by women in the USA and Europe during the 1920s (Gau 2005: 188–192). The brassiere and the zipper were items that significantly improved the efficient robing and operation of the female body, as women entered skilled occupations influenced by the post-World War 1 enthusiasm for scientific management practices.

The transmission, study and adoption of Taylorist systems in Europe had commenced before the outbreak of the European war in 1914. After 1919 in Soviet Russia, as noted earlier (Bailes 1977, 1978, 1981; Merkle 1980; Rogger 1981), the study of Taylorism and methods of improving efficiency and productivity in general had the highest official approval: by the 1920s, Taylorism was an exemplary traveling concept. In a study of the “feminization of American office work” between 1900 and 1930, Sharon Hartman Strom (1989: 58–59) points out that Frederick Winslow Taylor and Taylorism “immediately found disciples in the field of office work” in circumstances where “Routine clerical work, especially when performed on a large scale, whether mechanized [typewriting] or not, could be subjected to the principles of scientific management” (Hartman Strom 1989: 58). Hartman Strom’s contention is that “feminization, rationalization, and mechanization are in fact three separate variables, and we need to understand their unique histories as well as their common connections” (Hartman Strom 1989: 58–59). The common connections Hartman Strom examines in respect to the feminization of US office work or mechanized work in general can also be found in representations (graphics and posters) and images (photography and moving film) that capture or depict women at work, such as in Vertov’s *The Man with a Movie Camera*.

In the internal logic of *The Man with a Movie Camera*, the image of the woman fastening her brassiere was shown as she was getting
dressed and ready for the day. What follows, spliced in with shots of the woman dressing, is a sequence that explains to the audience the basic operation of a camera lens. In the first segment the opening and closing of louvered shutters on a window are made to appear analogous to the pulling in and out of a camera lens to achieve picture focus. Then the same woman seen earlier putting on the brassiere is shown blinking at the camera. This shot is positioned in sequence to appear analogous to the opening and closing of the same louvered shutters of the window, then the opening and closing of the camera lens iris. In short, Vertov has positioned the body of the woman as if it is a machine for seeing like the camera (and, it could be argued, vice versa). This set of links implies that the efficiently dressed woman is analogous to the efficient seeing machine. In the shots that follow, efficiently dressed modernist women are shown in contrast to crudely costumed Russian peasant women. These modern women are conspicuous as the industrial and technical workers of Vertov’s *The Man with a Movie Camera.*

The occupations of these women workers, including the film’s editor, imply either their own mechanization or their control over mechanization. For instance, Elizaveta Svilova is shown not only editing and cataloguing film but also splicing film and altering emulsion. In these sequences, movement comes to a stop, frames are isolated, rolls of film separated, hung to dry, tagged and archived, spliced and joined, run through an editing machine, and examined over a light box. Only then are still images, the captured information of cine-pravda, allowed to take life and animate before the viewer. Vertov shows Svilova, the film editor, in the defining act of the mechanical-flâneuse. Hers is the detached and blasé gaze, the mechanical cine-eye, as described by her husband. Vertov, whether intentionally or not, captures the detached and blasé gaze of efficiency manifest in Svilova’s stare that is perpetually present over the accumulated cine-facts.

Twenty-two minutes of Vertov’s film pass in which the audience has observed the “new” Soviet woman’s body efficiently outfitted in the brassiere (an item that by the 1930s would be increasingly referred to as a “bra”). The viewer has also observed the new Soviet woman as analogous to a camera operating and as technical controller/operator in Elizaveta Svilova’s function as film editor. The relationship of the new Soviet woman to the mechanical is then revisited in a variety of forms over the remainder of the film. These shots position the woman’s body as a machine and/or controller of a machine, including her operating the telephone switchboard (Figure 3) and on another occasion using a telephone to make what is later established as an emergency call to the ambulance service. Another variation on the theme of women in control of machines is the industrial weaving spindle operator who oversees the complex movements of this equipment, as well as a typist’s fingers rapidly typing.

It is worth noting that the typist, as a gendered role in the automation of office administration, appears rapidly after the invention and
commercialization of the typewriter in the late nineteenth century (England and Boyer 2009: 310–318). It is equally important to note that the feminization of the typist, as clerical worker, occurs in a similar pattern in the USA, Canada, the UK, Germany and Australia. For instance, in the Australian state of Victoria, women rose from 3.4% (330 in total) of clerical workers in 1880 to 55% (24,000 in total) in 1939 (Nolan 1992: 81). This pattern was mirrored in other comparable economies (le Clerc Phillips 1929; Keep 1997; Kittler 1999; Hartman Strom 1989; Führich 2000; England and Boyer 2009). Yet most studies, including those cited above, focus on the inherent and conventional divisiveness of clerical employment, where female typists were paid less than their male counterparts, but were expected to be skillful, young and single as well as prepared to leave the profession on marriage (England and Boyer 2009: 310, 312; Hartman Strom 1989: 62; le Clerc Phillips 1929: 12). However, despite lower pay rates than men, these typist women often earned more and in a preferable environment to other available work for women (Hartman Strom 1989: 54; England and Boyer 2009: 316–317).

Towards the end of Vertov’s film, the faces of the female machine and technology operators are superimposed over their piece of equipment, going through their rapid actions (Figures 4 and 5). In this montage sequence the analogy of the female body as machine is further articulated, with grabs showing a view from above of a woman’s hands rapidly using a typewriter keyboard overlapped (in a double exposér form of montage) with the face of the typist intensely gazing at the rapid movement of her fingers (Figure 5).
A similar, yet more conventionally treated representation of that ubiquitous instrument of managerial efficiency, the typewriter, in use is shown 10 years later in director Ernst Lubitsch’s 1939 movie for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer titled *Ninotchka*. Approximately 21 minutes into Lubitsch’s film, Commissar Ninotchka, played by Greta Garbo, arrives at the Grand Hotel in Paris. Once in her room, Ninotchka takes out a portable typewriter to interrogate and expose the inefficiency of the three Soviet trade envoys she has been sent to replace (Figure 6).
Lubitsch, with appealing irony, uses the standard Taylorist efficiency ratio of 1:3 to make it clear that one Soviet trade commissar, female in gender, can easily replace three Soviet trade envoys, male in gender.

The managerial efficiency of Ninotchka aside, all these images of women in Vertov’s *The Man with a Movie Camera* are combined with other material showing industry, mining, railway, trolley cars and so on, in a cascade of jump cuts of increasing speed. Vertov leaves little doubt that the female body was in-meshed in the same imperative as the machine. This idea had cultural currency and had been explored in a variety of ways in European and American cinema prior to and concurrently with Vertov. An example is offered in a production still and a publicity still for Clarence Brown’s movie titled *A Woman of Affairs* (1929).

**Clarence Brown—Machinery and Women**

*A Woman of Affairs* is a Hollywood silent film directed by Clarence Brown for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in late 1928 and released in early 1929. It starred Greta Garbo and John Gilbert and was a film adaptation of a popular novel, *The Green Hat* by Michael Arden. Despite significant changes, the novel and the film share the same central plot device of the “fast” life of a flapper named Iris in the novel, and Diana (Greta Garbo) in the film, and her doomed affair with Neville (John Gilbert). However, of interest here are two still images generated in production and publicity for the film. These photographs capture Garbo at the controls of the Hispano-Suiza car in which Iris/Diana eventually met her death. Both images were generated under the same circumstance in the film’s shooting, and possibly taken at the same moment on the same day, but obviously through different lenses.
The first image might be referred to as a behind-the-scenes shot and was no doubt made for studio archival interests (Figure 7). It shows the apparatus of cinema at work pre-production or in-production, rather than post-production as the seamless narrative experienced by cinema audiences. In this image, as in the second, Garbo’s passenger in the automobile is Neville (John Gilbert), her on-screen true love. In the first image, the photographer shows the vehicle from in front and to the right, including the actual paraphernalia of filming—the wooden framework that balances off and extends out from the front of the automobile. This structure consists of a platform on which the cinematographer William Daniels sits behind his movie camera supervised by the standing film director Clarence Brown. Beside the left front mudguard stands the lighting engineer manipulating a reflector board. Another reflector board can be seen propped up off the ground between where the photographer must be standing and the front of the Hispano-Suiza. There is also a long cantilevered wooden armature balanced from the platform and running back over the car bonnet to suspend a third reflector panel above the heads of both actors in the front seat. In this shot, the car is parked under a tree seen to the left rear of the vehicle, and further back almost parallel with the automobile is a line of sheds. Both actors are obviously concentrating on the task at hand, as is the film crew. However, in effect the two actors are centered in a movie-making machine that extends both outward from them and inward toward them, like the face of the spindle machine operator superimposed on the spindles by Vertov.

The second image is also situated in the Hispano-Suiza. Garbo is at the controls and Gilbert is her passenger. The photograph was taken directly in front looking along the bonnet of the vehicle back at the
occupants from below eye level (Figure 8). In this image Garbo’s hands are clearly visible on the steering wheel but she has shifted her body across toward the passenger. Gilbert’s right shoulder is slightly behind Garbo’s left, and he has his right arm around her so that his right hand rests on her right shoulder. Both Garbo and Gilbert stare out of the vehicle to their right. Their look is calm and Garbo’s appearance communicates a sense of serenity and pleasure. The light falls across their faces from the direction in which they stare but it is not possible to tell if the vehicle in which they are seated is moving or at a standstill. This image no doubt was intended as one of many publicity still shots, widely distributed to cinemas.

What makes both these images appear profound in respect to the mechanical-flâneuse? In the case of the first image, the private citizen Greta Gustafsson is captured not only in her mature professional circumstance as Greta Garbo the actor, but also in control of her career and the machinery of cinema production in which she was in-meshed. As with Vertov’s images of Elizaveta Svilova editing and cataloguing film, the MGM photographer shows Garbo at work, in the center of a cinema-producing machine. In the second image, the apparatus is hidden and this leaves the viewer with the image of Garbo and Gilbert in their respective characters, Diana and Neville. In other words, behind these publicity shots for a movie about a fictional flapper’s tragic affair, the actual woman at the controls conducted her professional self with a sense of present-purposefulness. What is more, unlike the ambiguous dichotomy in Vertov’s Soviet women, such as the woman with the lipstick compared to the women learning to swim, Garbo possessed and processed her professional self at the center of the cinematic machine.
including her trans-Atlantic image as an icon of modern femininity. Garbo within the cinema machinery was in control of her look and stands in comparison to Vertov’s Soviet mechanical-flâneuse and in advance of her later appearance as Ninotchka in *Ninotchka* (1939).

**The Missing Third: Olivetti’s Temp(orary) Typist as Mechanical-flâneuse**

The woman typist’s relationship to the typewriter became a pervasive sign of modern efficiency in commercial and state bureaucracies, which by the early 1930s was recognized by the manufacturers of typing machines. For instance, in 1934, an advertisement appeared for the Italian office equipment manufacturer Olivetti (Figures 9 and 10). In this case, Olivetti’s advertising image of a typist with her machine bears comparison with similar images in the films of Lubitsch and Vertov. The graphic artist responsible was Xanti (Alexander) Schawinsky (1904–1979), who was born in Switzerland but who died a US citizen. Schawinsky trained at the Dessau Bauhaus, Germany, in the late 1920s (Droste

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**Figure 9**

Detail from advertising for *Olivetti Ico MP1 (Portable Typewriter)* (1934) by Studio Boggeri in Supplemento 1934/1935 (Supplement 1934/1935) to *L’Illustrazione Italiana* 50 (December). Graphic designed by Xanti Schawinsky (1904–1979). Jon Cockburn Collection.
Figure 10

At the time Schawinsky was completing his training, Adriano Olivetti, in an effort to modernize the company’s systems of production, toured the United States. Subsequent to this trip, the Olivetti Company established its advertising section and employed Schawinsky’s services between 1933 and 1936 (Woodham 1997: 149).

The Schawinsky poster (Figure 9) is worth considering for a number of reasons implicit in both the final image and the transnational context of its production. What is it about this particular image and its unsettling ambiguities that make it appear to resonate with a presence that is exemplary of the mechanical-flâneuse? It is not that the image presented by the poster was unique. The combination of the efficient communications and administration machine with the modern woman was one that had been abroad and crossing borders politically and socially for several decades. Rather, it is the manner in which Schawinsky’s poster delivers its message. The poster divides into two halves, with the lower half occupied by one of the Olivetti Company’s typewriters. The head and shoulders of a young woman wearing a broad-brimmed fashionable hat occupy the upper half, with her hands resting palm-down on top of the office machine.

The typewriter depicted is red in color as if to match the woman’s lipstick, while the manner in which she rests her hands on top of the machine signals it is a possession and also creates a sense of dopo lavoro or work completed (after work). The simple message this image presented would have appealed to typists and employers alike, as it implied efficient ease of use and reduced time ordinarily spent on most typing tasks, leaving more for other pursuits. The image also carried a simple and specific message for potential typists, namely that this machine would enhance their employment prospects and increase their earnings and spending power as denoted by the woman’s fashionable attire. Additionally, the ease of use of an Olivetti meant that at the end of the day typists would not be exhausted or disheveled. Rather they would be ready to step out looking as fresh as when they arrived for work.

However, within the spaces of these simple messages are other texts. The content and formal arrangement of the poster’s composition is one such text, including the lightness of the machine, indicated by the structural clarity of its construction. The metal body of the typewriter with its modernist simplicity of lines hints at a certain aerodynamic quality. To the above qualities can also be added the typewriter’s color, which is anything but the usual office-machine grey. Likewise of note is the clarity with which the woman’s hands, face and general make-up are silhouetted against the dark but simple neckline of her dress and the broad ellipse of her hat set against a soft pink background. By resting her hands across the top of the machine, palms down and finger tips to finger tips, the woman in the poster also gives an accurate indication of the Olivetti’s compact dimensions. The Olivetti is a portable model (the Ico MP1), similar to the typewriter with which Ninotchka arrived.
in Paris and pulled from her briefcase to set up on the desk of her hotel suite.

In the case of the Olivetti poster, other modernist indicators reinforce the simplicity of the typewriter’s design and run as additional texts to the advertisement’s explicit message. As already noted, the woman’s lipstick shade appears to match the machine’s color, which is significant as this link draws the modern and efficient elegance of respective appearances—machine and woman—into one another, to the same effect but with greater subtlety than Vertov’s superimposition of machine spindle operators and spindle machines. The woman in Schawinsky’s Olivetti advertisement is both linked to and distinct from the machine. The Olivetti typewriter is hers and she operates this machine just as much as she (the operator) matches and belongs to the Olivetti. At this point the machine begins to form part of her “natural” accoutrements like her lipstick and her hat. This woman is dressed to go out accompanied by her typewriter. Which of these accoutrements came first is now open to debate, but it would be reasonably assumed that the efficient operation of a typewriter—the portable Olivetti—begat the income and mobility that bought the hat. Schawinsky’s composition for Olivetti (1934) stands in advance of Ninotchka (Lubitsch 1939), but it does remind us, coincidentally, that it was a rather distinctive hat that apprehended Ninotchka’s attention shortly after her arrival in Paris from Moscow on her way to the Grand Hotel, approximately 20 minutes into the film. The hat features in Ninotchka (1939) on at least three occasions, including the first encounter mentioned above, as the following transcript indicates:

0.20min.09sec:
NINOTCHKA: (inquires) “What is that?”
KOPALSKI: (replies) “It is a hat comrade, a woman’s hat”

Sometime later in the film, as Ninotchka’s mono-dimensional Taylorist persona (as efficient Soviet commissar) responds to Paris, we are shown her in her room of the Grand Hotel where:

0.50min.29sec:
NINOTCHKA: Takes out that hat and with it on her right hand she surveys it and walks over to a full-length mirror. Ninotchka places the hat on her head and then sits before the mirror with her head resting on her hand deeply pensive, contemplating her reflection and no doubt her actions.

Shortly after, Ninotchka, with her deportment and attire adjusted to meet the ambience of Paris, steps out of the Grand Hotel and makes her way to an appointment, a private rendezvous, in a modern Parisian apartment:
0.52 min. 44 sec:
Leon’s apartment—the door buzzer is heard.
LEON: Opens the door and retreats before the splendour of Ninotchka’s new “Parisian” outfit including that hat!
NINOTCHKA: “I don’t look foolish?”
LEON: “Foolish? If this dress were to walk down the boulevard all by itself I would follow it from one end of Paris to the other, and when I caught up with it I would say, ‘Just a moment, you charming little dress, I want you to meet Ninotchka … you two were meant for each other.”

Returning to Schawinsky’s poster composition for Olivetti (1934), another reading is possible in that what is depicted could easily have been an advertising appeal aimed at a new type of female present-presentness in the modern workforce: the mobile secretary or “temp,” called in at short notice to meet the administrative needs of commerce and state. Logistically and commercially the employment of temporary clerical staff, including female typists, dates back to the first significant impact of the typewriter on office administration in the late nineteenth century (Nolan 1992: 70). By 1910 the temporary “type-writer girl” had become the source of intrigue in popular drama and literature (Keep 1997: 408). Führich (2000), in the context of male anxieties over employment, also identifies similar themes of romantic intrigue and opportunist advancement associated with the female “temp” typist and typists in general (female clerical assistants) in popular Weimar cinema during the late 1920s and early 1930s.

Yet what is of interest here in Schawinsky’s Olivetti poster is the woman’s gaze, from out of frame beyond and slightly to the right of the viewer, as her line of sight acts to reinforce her sense of mobility. This is someone thinking beyond her present circumstance, as already stated, and in a simple reading this stare could be regarded as the dopo lavoro look or the look beyond office hours. However, if the poster woman represents the “temp,” then the look becomes a stare held in the company of her defining attributes. It is a stare toward future purposeful employment and the challenge of necessary tasks undertaken in the context of a certain engagé on behalf of commercial and/or state interests. If this is the case, then she holds this stare with a sense of a person in-meshed in her professional persona, not that far removed from Aleksandr Rodchenko’s photograph of Varvara Stepanova in her studio, although with a greater sense of style.

Schawinsky’s poster image is an Italian-German Americanism that represents the mechanical-flâneuse in 1934, but given Olivetti’s eye on trans-Atlantic markets, Schawinsky’s image is also a self-consciously “global” representation. In this poster the mechanical-flâneuse has her instrument of efficient and “modern” work supplied by Olivetti. Her appearance, however, is more than likely equal to a line-for-line copy.
or prêt-à-porter, just as her hat is a nod in the direction of famous European milliners and their continuing influence, such as Borsalino in Italy (established in 1857 by Giuseppe Borsalino, 1834–1900) and Caroline Reboux (1837–1927) in France, as described by McDowell (1992: 56, 154–155). Her make-up certainly reads as Hollywood via any number of popular magazines including the growing international impact of Vogue. In Schawinsky’s poster for Olivetti, production and consumption, garnered with strong sensual connotations, are intertwined and criss-cross the Atlantic. The ability to step out from work into the parade of urbane possibilities yet retain the presence of purposefulness that defines the mechanical-flâneuse (woman of self-earned independent means) is the missing third value implied by Schawinsky’s depiction for Olivetti (modern machine) and glamorous woman (luxury).

The poster by Xanti Schawinsky for Olivetti’s Ico MP1 portable typewriter is also significant for the way it was incorporated into an advertising layout that appeared in Supplemento 1934/1935 (Supplement 1934/1935) to L’Illustrazione Italiana No. 50 in early December 1934 (Figure 10). Occupying a full page spread on page XXX of the promotions “tavola” that took up the first section of the Supplement and distinct by being paginated in Roman numerals, the advertisement exhibits all the standard features of Jan Tschichold’s Neue Typographie (New Typography) layout practices. Tschichold published and promoted the Neue Typographie in 1928 and its principles were familiar to The Circle of New Advertising Designers (NWG or “ring ‘Neue Werbegestalter’”) group, who were known to Herbert Bayer and shared a modernist approach reflected in Bauhaus teachings (Lavin et al. 1992).

Schawinsky’s poster is positioned to the center right of the page, surrounded by white space with a blue line partitioning off a rectangle in the lower eighth that disappears behind the Schawinsky poster. Running beside the poster on the lower left side a column of copy traverses the top blue line of the rectangle. Taking up the width and enclosed in the blue rectangle below the poster can be read: OLIVETTI “Portatile.” The black type of the copy, against the white background to the left of the poster, reads in Italian capital letters:

LA RARA ELEGANZA DELLA OLIVETTI PORTATILE È STATA RICONOSCIUTA ED ACCOLTA SENZA RISERVE. SI È COMPRESO CHE LA PERFEZIONE DELLE PARTI E L’ARMONIA DELL’INSIEME PLASTICO, SONO UNA RIGOROSA CONSEGUENZA DELLA LOGICITÀ DELLA CREAZIONE MECCANICA.

Translated into English the Italian asserts that:

The rare elegance of the Olivetti Portable has been recognized and embraced without reserve. It is understood that the perfection
of the components and the harmony of the whole are a rigorous consequence of the logic of mechanical creation.

The message loaded into the copy is interesting as it highlights the advanced engineering efficiency of the typewriter, implying a value in tandem with those who choose to use this portable Olivetti. Each, the user and the machine, advances the efficiency of the other. Close inspection of the poster reveals at the bottom left, just under the leading edge of the typewriter, attribution to Xanti Schawinsky and Studio Boggeri, listed in abbreviated form as:

comp, Xanti
studio boggeri

Olivetti advertisements for the *Ico MP1* appear again in *L’Illustrazione Italiana* in 1935, although in different layouts with alternative copy. Whether or not Schawinsky’s 1934 version for Olivetti ran in other Italian or European print media remains to be established.

However, taking into consideration that the 1934 poster by Xanti Schawinsky (Figure 9) for Olivetti’s *Ico MP1* portable typewriter appeared in a Christmas supplement to *L’Illustrazione Italiana* (Figure 10), a conservative reading might conflate brand new typewriter (consumer item) and accompanying woman staring out of frame (at invisible onlooker) as doubling the potential of a gift to a man. In short, you (the female gift giver) will be more attractive to him (the invisible onlooker) with this gift of a portable typewriter. Yet it is actually a woman, in the well-rehearsed act of female transvestism (Doane 1992), who stares at this advertisement and who will make a gift of an Olivetti portable typewriter. But such a conservative reading ignores two important points.

Firstly there were a significant number of women who by the mid-1930s occupied positions as stenographers and typists. Administrative skills, including proficiency at typing, offered the possibility of clean, comfortable white-collar jobs for women. US Bureau of the Census data dramatically illustrates the demographic shift ushered in by the typewriter, noting that in 1870 only 4–5% of stenographers and typists were women, or seven in total. By 1890 the figure had increased to 76.7% or 86,000 women and by 1930 the proportion of stenographers and typists who were women had risen to 95.6%, a total of 775,000 (cited in Kittler 1999: 184). It could be argued, as pointed out earlier, that similar patterns and transitions to employment also occurred in the advanced industrial countries of Western Europe, including Italy, which is certainly one of the inferences from the film stills and publicity material discussed in this paper.

The second point worth noting is that Olivetti had, in advertising, paired the *Ico MP1* portable typewriter with stylish young women
Figure 11
Advertising for Olivetti Ico MP1 (Portable Typewriter) (1932) by anonymous in Supplemento 1932/1933 (Supplement 1932/1933) to L'Illustrazione Italiana 50(December). Jon Cockburn Collection.
shortly after it was first manufactured and sold in 1932. An unmistakable Art Deco graphic was used to advertise the “Olivetti ‘Portatile’” (Olivetti Portable Typewriter Ico MP1) in *Suplemento 1932* (Supplement 1932) to *L’Illustrazione Italiana* No. 50, December 11, 1932 (page XXX of the promotions “tavola”). At the bottom front of the image can be seen seated in a yellow armchair an elegant young woman with bobbed hair typing on a black Olivetti Ico MP1 portable typewriter. She is depicted in a stylishly furnished Art Deco modernist apartment, presumably her own (Figure 11).

**Conclusion**

The figure of the mechanical-*flâneuse* set out in this paper makes a claim for the continuance of the *flâneur/flâneuse* into the twentieth century and across national borders. Distinctively, this paper argues that as traveling theory *flânerie* spanning the early to mid-twentieth century intersected with and took on attributes from the efficiency movement. The paper addressed selected images of the mechanical-*flâneuse* using a method not preoccupied with the convention of reading modernity through the lens of avant-garde art history. The topic of the Soviet avant-garde has been acknowledged, but as Christina Kiaer (2001) pointed out in her study on the constructivist flapper dress, any restriction of discussion to Soviet avant-garde rhetoric and their formalist devices is an approach that is “too narrow” (Kiaer 2001: 191). Similarly, the images addressed in this paper do not privilege the object as fashion artifact in a discourse on fine arts. On the contrary, this paper identifies moments in the coalescence of two traveling and changing theories: those of *flânerie* and those of the efficiency movement and its impact on the shaping of self-presentation.

In 1924, at the time Rodchenko photographed Stepanova, bourgeois displays of self, especially in public, were proscribed and replaced with the attentive *flânerie* of the “efficient,” alert and productive member of the “new” revolutionary society. In Rodchenko’s 1924 photo-portrait, amidst the unstable modernity of revolutionary Russia, Stepanova’s stare is ambiguous: she appears relaxed, but otherwise *engagé*. It is the stare of the mechanical-*flâneuse*: it is not an evacuation of the present, or a negation of the modern, but a going away so as to be at rest or drift within modernity.

Five years later in 1929, and in far more emphatic terms, Vertov captures revolutionary progress in development, paying attention to its contributing and aware members. Vertov’s shots of workers shown attending to or using machines with focused application, be they typewriters or cotton mill spindles, undoubtedly aims to present Soviet gains in industrial development and expertise. Vertov’s shot sequence also mirrors similar sequences on film and in photographs found in the Frank and Lillian Gilbreth archives at Purdue University, West Lafayette,
USA. The Gilbreth studies dating between c. 1908 and 1924 document research into workplace efficiency. Yet any direct knowledge by Vertov of the Gilbreth motion studies research is an open question. But what is not in doubt is Soviet knowledge of the Gilbreths’ research, as part of their general interest in applying efficiency methods to the restructuring and improvement of Soviet industry and the Soviet worker’s attitude and approach.

In 1929, the same year Vertov released *The Man with a Movie Camera*, across the Atlantic in Hollywood the machinery of movie making was measured by efficiency in production over returns at the box office. Efficiency in the movie industry pervaded every level, just as it was a factor at large in American society since 1911 and one under significant pressure in the wake of the 1929 Wall Street collapse. The continual development of efficiency as traveling theory throughout the 1920s and 1930s informs not only the reshaping of self-presentation and workplace actions, but also the updating of plant and equipment. In the case of Greta Garbo, her efficiency as a professional actor in the late 1920s meant negotiating successfully the shift from silence to sound in movie making. Garbo’s appearance in Lubitsch’s *Ninotchka* (1939) testifies to her success. Significantly, Greta Garbo employs the stare of the mechanical-flâneuse at drift couched in the ambient context of present-presentness and all its preoccupations as a predominant trait in her role as doomed flapper, caught in a film still for Clarence Brown’s silent movie *A Woman of Affairs* (1929). Greta Garbo again employs this stare, but with commanding presence and purpose, a decade later as Ninotchka in the sound movie *Ninotchka* (1939) for Ernst Lubitsch. In addition to these two images of Garbo, as person at work and persona at work, are other representations of women in-meshed in the efficiency of modernity’s operation, including those already explored.

In the early 1930s, the production by Olivetti and other manufacturers of the lightweight portable typewriter established a new “accoutrement” for the worker on the move. The new range of portable typewriters supplied the typist or efficient knowledge worker greater flexibility and mobility. We see her actively superimposed over her machine’s keyboard by Vertov in 1929, and we see her as pensive, alert and purposeful as captured in 1934 by Schawinsky and depicted in 1939 by Garbo for Lubitsch. In Western Europe and the USA during the period between 1919 and 1939, even taking into account the Great Depression, the mass of workers re-formed after hours as a mass of consumers in the shopping precincts and arenas of entertainment and leisure. Between these masses the mechanical-flâneuse strode, equally in control of the machine and the bargain.

In the Soviet Union, however, the masses were being organized in line with reinterpreted Taylorism dictated by the imperatives of collectivized efficiency, where consumption was separated from production, initially by economic downturn and later by ideology and availability.
The Soviet mechanical-flâneuse could not play with her self-image as combined mechanical controller and clever consumer in quite the same manner as her American and Western European counterpart. As Kiaer (2001: 186–189) observes, “socialist consumption” repositioned the “everyday material object” as commodity. The Soviet mechanical-flâneuse was, alternatively, defined after the machine and the means of production that was now owned by her as a member of the proletariat. In place of clever participation in spectacular forms of Western consumption, the Soviet mechanical-flâneuse was left with efficient participation in production and utilitarian consumption, referred to by Richard Stites (1989: 59–164) as “living the revolution” wherein he examines Soviet cults of the machine. Under these circumstances and through these social spaces strides the Soviet mechanical-flâneuse: or at the very least Ernst Lubitsch and Greta Garbo’s popular interpretation of her (Cockburn 2005: 121).

In the case of Xanti Schawinsky’s image for Olivetti and arguably Garbo captured at work with Clarence Brown, the mechanical-flâneuse is far less national and far less ideological in stride. Yet in each instance examined, the mechanical-flâneuse, as traveling concept, negotiates the receptive or resistant circumstances of her moment in time and place to reform as a particularly resonant representation of identity. The “newly” skilled working woman captured between 1924 and 1939 in the images discussed, whether a waged factory machinist or salaried staff, all along the line takes on responsibility in some part for producing goods, consuming goods and processing information. In her identity as mechanical-flâneuse the “new” woman’s knowledge merges with her self-presentation as a representation of efficiency’s modernized and aware disposition.

**Disclosure Statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

**Notes**

1. In 1858, Victor Fournel argued that true flânerie involved an acute awareness of the urban terrain, its forms, diversity and “every reflection that they cast, the process of things, the movement of the city, the multifarious physiognomy of the public mind, the beliefs, antipathies and adorations of the mass” (Fournel [1858] 1993: 492).

2. The claim by F.W. Taylor that scientific management improves productivity on a 1:3 ratio, or one efficient worker being capable of producing to the same level as three inefficient workers, is stated in variations on at least three occasions, firstly when discussing improvements at a bearings manufacturer:
The second instance of the Taylorist ratio being stated is when Taylor discusses the use of precise instructions when directing the efficient cutting of metals:

with the aid of a slide-rule, and after having studied the art of cutting metals, it was possible for the scientifically equipped man, who had never before seen these particular jobs, and who had never worked on this machine, to do work from two and one-half to nine times as fast as it had been done before by a good mechanic who had spent his whole time for some ten to twelve years in doing this very work upon this particular machine. (Taylor [1911] 1964: 101–102)

The third instance of the Taylorist ratio being used is in support of increased remuneration for those adopting scientific management methods and realizing productivity efficiencies, in this case men working with iron ingots:

It does seem grossly unjust when the bare statement is made that the competent pig-iron handler, for instance, who has been so trained that he piles $3^{6/10}$ times as much iron as the incompetent man formerly did, should receive an increase of only 60 per cent in wages. (Taylor [1911] 1964: 136)

3. The use of the word “in-meshed” is intentional as it carries the meaning: to be engaged in the teeth of wheels (Concise Oxford Dictionary 1990: 744) as, for example, to be in or to put into gear. Another similar term is “immersed,” as in the industrial sense of the zinc, acid or enamel bath process. Both of these terms are preferred over “enmesh” that implies “entangle in or as in a net” (Concise Oxford Dictionary 1990: 389).

4. In the early 1920s, members of the Soviet avant-garde, such as Osip Brik and Varvara Stepanova, promoted the “productivist” role of cultural producers by, for instance, fashion and textiles designers. For analysis of the implications of “productivism,” see Kiaer (2001) who discusses fashion and textiles in the context of Soviet society and “socialist consumption,” and Cockburn (2005) who examines fashion, textiles and productivism under the influence of the international efficiency movement otherwise known as scientific management or Taylorism.
5. For the original framework of the concept “defamiliarization” and later discussion, see Shklovsky (1917), Holub (1984) and Stam et al. (1992).

6. In 1924, Rodchenko made numerous photographic studies of Stepanova at work. One shows Stepanova in another dress made of her fabric design, this time seated at her workbench in a composition that almost mirrors that of Rodchenko’s other well-known photograph from 1924 of the constructivist theorist Alexei Gan (1889–c. 1940). An additional photograph worth considering is Rodchenko’s close-up photograph of Stepanova, cigarette in corner of mouth, with a designer’s compass in her left hand drawing circular patterns. Yet another photograph by Rodchenko of Stepanova shows her leaning forward on her elbows across a work desk scattered with graphic designs, drawing equipment and an alarm clock. In this image Stepanova holds a cigarette to her lips with her left hand while staring out of frame across her desk. Her hair is ruffled and she is wearing work clothes. These images are equally readable in terms of “drift” in the context of purposeful-presentness or the stare *engagé* as the stare that is “at work.” For reproductions see Lavrentiev (1988: 87, 103).

7. Charney (1995: 285) uses the phrase ‘present presence’ to describe awareness of the heightened sensation of rapidly shifting circumstances that informed the ‘temporal experience of modernity’.

8. Christina Kiaer, citing Boris Arvatov (1896–1940), a member of Proletkult who promoted constructivism and had connections with avant-garde contributors to the journal *LEF*, notes the irony of reality that confronted constructivist and productivist ideals. Osip Brik’s assertion that the “artistic culture of the future is being created in factories and plants, not in attic studios” (Brik [1924] 1988: 249), plus his naming of Popova and Stepanova as exemplars of this move, is exaggerated in fact although not in attitude. As Kiaer (2001: 207–208) points out:

Corroborating Arvatov’s pessimism, and perhaps predictably, Popova and Stepanova’s Constructivist requests to be more than traditional designers were largely refused by factory management. They were not invited to work in the factory’s research laboratory; in fact, they did not even work in the factory’s design atelier but rather at home in their studios. They went to the factory to drop off their designs, as depicted in a caricature by Stepanova that shows Popova on her way to the factory pushing a wheelbarrow filled with designs (“I’m taking my weekly production of designs to Tsindel!” she says), while Stepanova herself is hand carrying two designs to the same destination.
9. As noted earlier, Rodchenko’s photograph is composed using the “angled look” strategy of “defamiliarization” (also known as “making strange”), favored by the Soviet avant-garde, that in itself implies movement. The conceptual basis to this approach is attributed to the Russian formalist and later Soviet film theorist Viktor Shklovsky ([1917] 1993: 277), who argued that:

The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects “unfamiliar,” to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. Art is a way of experiencing the artfulness of an object; the object is not important.

The angled look is considered to impart dynamism and a sense of movement to an image, as the image resists our attempts to adjust the composition to the more stable planes of the conventional horizontal and vertical picture axis. On this basis it could be claimed that Rodchenko’s photograph, while showing Stepanova inactive, does by its compositional devices imply that she is active.

10. The political scientist Wolfgang Holz (1993) in “Allegory and Iconography in Socialist Painting” examines a number of devices in the work of the painter Aleksandr Samokhvalov, whose depictions of the “New Socialist Woman” most often observed her at sporting events, such as The Shot-Putter, 1933 (o/c 125 x 66 cm, Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow), or in physical labor on building sites, such as Woman Metro-Builder with a Pneumatic Drill, 1937 (o/c 205 x 130 cm, State Russian Museum, St Petersburg). Holz, in an analysis of Samokhvalov’s The Shot-Putter and the letter “D” on the female athlete’s singlet, makes the following interpretation:

Simultaneously, the Russian title of the picture, Devushka s yadrom, mobilises another dimension in the portrayal of the New Soviet Person. Samokhvalov puts forward a general ideal of socialist humanity, culminating in the understanding of human physique as parallel to industrial machinery—the real ruling “subjects” in the Five Year Plan society. By combining the alliteration of devushka (girl), dirizhabl (Zeppelin) and dinamo into a semantic pictorial structure—condensed into the letter “D”—the New Socialist Person is assimilated to “machine physique”, and the concept of “dynamic machine” is used to determine their function, movement and rhythm. Thus the dinamo-woman becomes totally identifiable with her “dynamic” physicality. She succeeds in incarnating the ideal of the “machine-body”, inside which soul and physical body
bear the dynamic tempo of the organised society. (Holz 1993: 79)

In general, the question of what form of representation is or should be the New Soviet Man or the New Soviet Woman preoccupied cinema, the visual arts, literature and graphic design throughout the history of the USSR.

11. The relationship of power and exchange of objectivity and subjectivity between viewers and the viewed, often referred to as the “gaze” especially with respect to the operations of the camera, framing and editing in film, has been explored in great depth since the publication of Laura Mulvey’s essay “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema” (1975). However, a detailed discussion of the “gaze” and its conceptual legacy in film theory represents a digression too large for the immediate concerns of this paper, yet deserves acknowledgement that this note brings. It should also be added that while this paper focuses on the depiction of women in Vertov’s The Man with a Movie Camera, the presence of men in the film represents fuel for further research including where they are depicted and in what functions and with what measure of agency they are captured, by Vertov’s cameraman.

12. Colleen Gau (2005: 188) points out the origin of brassiere: “A Norman French word for a child’s undershirt, the term ‘brassiere’ was adopted in America about 1904 when it appeared in New York advertising copy of the DeBevoise Company to describe their latest bust supporter, thus giving it French cachet.” In the early part of the twentieth century, the term brassiere quickly became the word for the undergarment supporting women’s breasts. Gau (2005: 190) adds “In the 1930s, when slang shortened words like pajamas to ‘pj’s’, brassieres became ‘bras.’”

13. Garbo featured regularly either for product endorsements or in news print, magazines and trade journal articles throughout the late 1920s and 1930s. For instance she twice appeared on magazine covers in 1928, once in February for Motion Picture Classic and again in May for Screenland. She was also on the cover of Screenland in August 1933. Garbo is a key figure in the increasing visibility of celebrity popular culture and its commercial viability, beyond film work, that fueled the cult of stardom. Garbo’s ability to effectively negotiate her professional earnings with the Hollywood Studios dates from late 1926, making her one of the first and highest paid actresses in the history of the studio system. This aspect of Garbo’s personality became so well known that Cole Porter incorporated it into one of his song lyrics:
You’re the top!
You’re the National Gallery,
You’re the top!
You’re Garbo’s salary…
For more on this topic see Barry Paris (1995: 113, 262–327).

14. The relationship between Garbo and Gilbert is covered in the vast majority of biographies written on the actress. However, for one of the most detailed and insightful examinations of their romance and relationship see Barry Paris (1995).

15. Before the advent of sound film, the silent film industry was relatively international or global. Splicing into silent film imports different language credits and dialogue inter-titles was a far easier process than recording a dub sound soundtrack or producing a subtitled sound print as required of later foreign language sound film imports. This also accounts for the competitive interest of major Hollywood film studios of the silent era for European directors, actors and product and for the success of their product abroad.

16. It is worth noting that in 1929, at about the same time Xanti Schawinsky was undergoing his training at the Bauhaus, Elsa Herrmann, writing on the persona of the “new” woman in Weimar Germany, asserted that “the woman of today is oriented exclusively toward the present. That which is decisive for her, not that which should be or should have been according to tradition” (Herrmann [1929] 1995: 207). Herrmann ([1929] 1995: 208) then followed up this statement with:

The new woman is therefore no artificially conjured phenomenon, consciously conceived in opposition to an existing system; rather, she is organically bound up with the economic and cultural developments of the last few decades.

Two things stand out in Herrmann’s essay on the new woman in late 1920s Weimar Germany. Firstly, the new woman is one who operates in the “present” of economic, political and cultural modernity and secondly her disposition is defined by being aware and conscious of the forces shaping the momentum of the present moment.

17. The Script for this scene is as follows:

0.21min.36sec:
NINOTCHKA: (moves behind the desk, sets up the portable typewriter and sits behind it as if to start work) “I hope so for your sakes—let us examine the case—what does the lawyer say?”
BULJANOFF: “Which lawyer?”
NINOTCHKA: (incredulously) “You didn’t get legal advice?”
KOPALSKI: “We dealt directly with a representative of the Grand Duchess, I’m sure if you call him he will give you a very clear picture.”
NINOTCHKA: (feeding and aligning a sheet of paper into the typewriter) “I will not repeat your mistake, I will have no dealings with the Grand Duchess nor her representative” (Ninotchka begins typing, the envoys strain forward over the desk as if trying to read her type, Ninotchka looks up) “Comrade Buljanoff?”
BULJANOFF: (sheepishly) “Yes comrade?”
NINOTCHKA: “Do you spell Buljanoff with one or two f’s?”
BULJANOFF: (still sheepish) “Two f’s if you please.”


19. The translation of this advertising copy from Italian into English is by the author with assistance from Ilaria Vanni-Accarigi.

20. In a study on the theory and practice of flânerie in the twenty-first century, Kramer and Short (2011: 338–339) argue that the flâneur, as described by Baudelaire in the nineteenth century and Benjamin in the twentieth century, has been reclaimed by the global nomad flâneur/flâneuse. Kramer and Short’s (2011: 339) global nomad flâneur/flâneuse is described as “immersed in labyrinths of urban, extrarural, nomadic and even diasporic.” Kramer and Short’s (2011: 339) global nomad flâneur/flâneuse also employs flânerie as a method of research that merges sociology, ethnography, geography and cultural practice “into a unique mode of analysis.”

21. In the case of Kiaer’s argument, her broader concerns embrace the relationship of Liubov Popova and Varvara Stepanova to cotton-printing production and post-revolutionary redefinitions of consumption. As Kiaer (2001: 190) points out, Popova and Stepanova recognized the “phantasmic power of the object” and “knew that the real test of their textile design work at the First State Cotton-Printing Factory would come in clothing design—in the formation, from their fabrics, of three-dimensional things for use in everyday life.”

22. The subjects captured by Frank and Lillian Gilbreth in their motion studies on efficiency using moving film, photography and stereophotography is remarkable, especially for how the range of activities and occupations studied by them matches those in Vertov’s documentary film The Man with a Movie Camera (1929). Also
of particular interest in the Gilbreth Archive at Purdue University is a transcript by Lillian Gilbreth of a letter sent by her cousin Annie Florence Brown to Annie’s sister Matilda. The letter was sent from USSR while Annie was visiting the country sometime between the late 1920s and early 1930s, when she is known to have been in Europe on two separate occasions. The letter is the subject of ongoing research and a forthcoming paper. In the letter Annie describes how she identified herself as Lillian Gilbreth’s cousin to her Russian tour party guide who:

smiled a radiant smile and threw up his large hands with “Why the Gilbreths—they are our guides in Scientific Management, in all of our trade work and instruction we use their books. Our bricklayers study Frank Gilbreth’s work on bricklaying, and Lillian Gilbreth’s ‘Psychology of Scientific Management’ is like a bible to us. ‘Come with me Madame’”. I followed him into a well equipped, well catalogued library and there were many of Frank’s and Lillie’s books—not merely in the shelves but marked and thumbed so that at a glance one could see that they had been studied from every viewpoint—So this in far away Soviet Russia. (Gilbreth Location VT Box 107. N-File 0819-4 NHO. Appreciation, Russia. n.d.).

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**Filmography**
